

END-TIMES ISSUES

#37 What was Moses doing on the mountain?

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MOSES HAD AN EXTENDED MEETING WITH GOD TWICE ON MOUNT SINAI.

The **FIRST** time – after the people said they would obey God.
 The **SECOND** time – after the people sinned against God by worshipping the golden calf.

Certain things occurred BOTH times:

- ✓ It was for **40 days and 40 nights**. During this time, Moses **did not eat or drink**.
 - 1st time: Exodus 24:18; Deuteronomy 9:9.
 - 2nd time: Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:18 (mentioned again in 9:25; 10:10).
- ✓ God inscribed the **10 Commandments** (called the "words of the covenant") on **stone tablets** and gave them to Moses.
 - 1st time: Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10-11. (The tablets were broken by Moses – a response to the people's sin.)
 - 2nd time: Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 10:4.

There were also differences:

During the FIRST meeting ...

- ✓ Moses was given **various other instructions** – including how to make the tabernacle: Exodus 25-31. (These probably didn't need rewritten during the second meeting.)

During the SECOND meeting ...

- ✓ Moses **fell down before the Lord, interceding and praying** that the Lord would NOT destroy Israel for their sin. **God listened to him** and did NOT destroy the nation: Exodus 33:12-17; 34:1-4, 9-28; Deuteronomy 9:18-20, 25-29; 10:1-5, 10-11.
- ✓ Moses had **the opportunity to see more of God's glory** than before... it caused his face to glow: Exodus 33:18-23; 34:5-8, 29-35. Moses' response was to **worship**: Exodus 34:8.
- ✓ Moses could have done some of these things in *both* meetings: ① **falling down before God**, ② **prayer**, ③ **worship**.

Let's do some thinking...

During the FIRST meeting:

- The Ten Commandments were written on stone by God. That doesn't seem like it would take too long!
- The other instructions (Exodus 25-31) were probably written (by Moses) on a scroll – a few hours time?
- We could find ourselves asking, "What happened during the other 39 days?"

During the SECOND meeting:

- Asking God to forgive the people would seem to be a quick request ("Please forgive them!") and a quick answer ("Yes!").
- We could find ourselves asking, "What happened during the other 39% days?"

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Was Moses just sitting around most of the time?

- We could imagine a response like this...

Can I go back down the mountain now?
I've got a busy schedule!

ALSO:

Don't forget the six days before that! Moses was on the mountain, waiting for God to call him into his presence!

- Some of us would have probably given up and quit by the time those six days were *half* over!

Well, God must not have anything important to say... or he would have said it by now!

- ❖ **Perhaps the problem is that we don't comprehend certain foundational issues** – such as the significance of being in the presence of ...
 - **Someone who is much greater than we are.** In this case, it's someone who is *infinitely* greater, and totally unlike us – someone we owe everything to, *even our existence*.
 - **Someone who has every right to totally destroy us.** Our sin and rebellion against God is nothing less than *treason* against the King of Kings.

- ✓ **God owes us nothing; we owe God everything.**
- ✓ **We deserve nothing; God deserves everything.**

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE...

- ✓ **We have incurred a debt for sin that must be paid;** and it would take an *eternity* for us to pay it off.

For the **wages of sin** is death, ...
Romans 6:23a (BSB)

✚ Jesus has offered to pay our sin debt. Fellowship with God is restored for *all* who repent and trust him.

... but the **gift of God** is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 6:23b (BSB)

★ **But this does not undo the radical difference between humans (even forgiven humans) and God.** ★
Nor the attitude we should have toward this God.

❖ Perhaps another problem is that we don't understand who God actually is. FOR INSTANCE:

- People tend to want to "define" God, instead of submitting to his *self*-revelation. (How arrogant and self-exalting!)

They like to choose which characteristics they want for "defining" God... and ignore the other characteristics that Scripture says are *equally* a part of who God is. (Some people are even *offended* by the way God defines himself!)

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✓ Example: Consider how God describes himself. Do you take offense... or do you respond the way Moses responded?

Then the LORD passed in front of Moses and called out:

"The LORD, the LORD God, is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving devotion and faithfulness, maintaining loving devotion to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished; He will visit the iniquity of the fathers on their children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

★ **Moses immediately bowed down to the ground and worshiped.** ★

Exodus 34:6-8 (BSB)

People often like this part... And take offense at this part.

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✓ Example: A characteristic that offends many people:

For the LORD your God is a **consuming fire**, a jealous God.
Deuteronomy 4:24 (BSB)

"For our God is a **consuming fire**."
Hebrews 12:29 (BSB)

WRONG!! ⇒ LET'S JUST TALK ABOUT "GOD IS LOVE"!

SO WHAT DID MOSES DO DURING THOSE 40 DAYS ON THE MOUNTAIN?

Below are some suggestions – things that are either expressly stated, or which could be expected, based on the characteristics of Moses' life. Note that these are the *same* types of things that should characterize *our* lives.

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FIRST: 1) Moses was keenly aware of the differences between God and people.

This is the *foundation* that influences attitude and actions.

⇒ If you read the life of Moses, you will see many situations that would have taught Moses about these issues. *This would have influenced his response during the entire "40-day event."*

- 1) **A created being in the presence of the uncreated.**
 - God, in his fullness, is totally beyond our comprehension.
- 2) **A servant/slave in the presence of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.** (Note that "lord" means "master.")

(Some translations will use the word "Lord," when the original Old Testament Hebrew used the name of God – which can also be translated as "Jehovah" or "Yahweh." (This follows the pattern of an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament.) Sometimes they will use capital letters to indicate the name of God – "LORD" vs. "Lord.")

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- 3) **A sinner in the presence of the holy and righteous God.**
 - God would be holy and righteous even if we *hadn't* sinned... but our sin *intensifies* the differences, and adds the dimension of *deserved wrath*.
 - Our rebellion against the King of Kings means we are *traitors*. We have committed *treason*, and deserve *nothing but death*.
- 4) **Our God is not in the same category as other gods.**
 - The "gods" of the Old Testament are the "demons" of the New Testament, also called the "spiritual forces of darkness," etc.

These foundational concepts should influence **everything** we do in life.

>> AND BECAUSE OF THIS... <<

⇒ ⇒ ⇒ 5) **We need to pay attention to God!!**

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RANDOMLY-SELECTED VERSES about the greatness of God, and the vast difference between God and people.

But the LORD is in His holy temple; **let all the earth be silent before Him.**
Habakkuk 2:20 (BSB)

But will God indeed dwell upon the earth? **Even heaven, the highest heaven, cannot contain You**, much less this temple I have built.
1 Kings 8:27 (BSB)

Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. ...
God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.
Ecclesiastes 5:1, 2b (NIV)

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, **so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**"
Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

MORE

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Who among the gods is like You, O LORD?
Who is like You—majestic in holiness, revered with praises, performing wonders?
Exodus 15:11(BSB)

Moses' father-in-law's observation:
"Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who has delivered the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that **the LORD is greater than all other gods**, for He did this when they treated Israel with arrogance."
Exodus 18:10-11 (BSB)

Our sinfulness... God can understand it; we don't.
The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.
Who can understand it?
I, the LORD, search the heart; I examine the mind
to reward a man according to his way, by what his deeds deserve.
Jeremiah 17:9-10 (BSB)

Having recognized these foundational issues between God and people...

Moses: 2) Had the right attitude toward God, and was characterized by:
3) The types of actions that go along with such an attitude.

⇒ Here are some examples of Moses' attitude and actions. (It is often difficult to separate them.)


- We will also see that both Old and New Testaments tell us that these things should also be our attitude and actions.

BUILDING ON THE RIGHT FOUNDATION!

3. ACTIONS – The things we do (influenced by our attitude, based on God's Word).

2. ATTITUDE – Our thinking (based on God's Word).

1. AWARE of the foundation – God's Word.



❖ **Attitude: Humility.** This involves recognizing one's low position before the Creator, and having a willingness to respond based on that truth.

- MOSES:** This attitude characterized Moses' life and would have influenced what he did on Mount Sinai.
Now Moses was a very humble man, more so than any man on the face of the earth.
Numbers 12:3 (BSB)
- US:** God requires that we all have humility. In other words, to not be humble is to sin – Micah 6:8; James 4:6b; Colossians 3:12; Jesus' example – Philippians 2:5-8.
Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.
James 4:10 (BSB)
Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves.
Philippians 2:3 (BSB)

❖ **Attitude: Faith / trust.** It is our duty to accept what God says is true, and to base our lives on that truth.

❖ **Action: Obedience.** The result of basing our lives on that truth.

- MOSES:** Hebrews 11 describes Moses as a man of faith (vs. 24, 27-28) – and this faith determined his actions. This faith/trust would have influenced Moses' response on Mount Sinai.
One of the consequences of trusting God is faithfulness – which would be demonstrated by obedience.
... My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house.
Numbers 12:7b (BSB); see also Hebrews 3:2, 5.
- US:** We all need to trust God, to be saved... and it needs to be a living faith, based on the power of God.
... the righteous will live by faith ...
Habakkuk 2:4b (BSB); quoted 3 times in the N.T.

❖ **Attitude: Fear of God.** This is one of those concepts that false teachers often vehemently oppose. Yet Scripture – both Old and New Testaments – describes it as a necessary response. There are things that we are told to not fear. The context will show us which is which.

❖ **Action: Trembling.** This concept is often found in the same context as the word "fear."

- MOSES:**
When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush:
Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.
Acts 7:32b (BSB)
At Mount Sinai:
The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."
Hebrews 12:21 (NIV)
Everyone in the camp trembled.
Exodus 19:16b (NIV)

- US:** Having the "fear of God" is an obligation for all people. Scripture tells us that those who don't fear God are unsaved. (People who refuse to fear God now will fear God later... but it will be too late for them to be saved.)
Consider verses such as these:
Our duty:
Concerning the wicked:
"There is no fear of God before their eyes."
Romans 3:18 (BSB); from Psalm 36:1.
... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.
Philippians 2:12b-13 (NIV)
Jesus says:
"I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him."
Luke 12:4-5 (NIV)

❖ **Attitude: Awe of God**, because of who he is and what he does. (Often associated with fear of God.) This focuses on God's greatness, contrasted to our smallness, or inferiority.

- **MOSES:** He often described God this way.

... the LORD your God, who is among you, is a great and **awesome** God.
... the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and **awesome** God ...
Deuteronomy 7:21b; 10:17a (BSB)

- **US:** This attitude is an obligation for *everyone*.

Therefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us be filled with gratitude, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and **awe**.
Hebrews 12:28 (BSB)

(See also: Psalm 66:3-4.)

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❖ **Action: Love for God and people.** This love is *commanded*; so we can also say that it is an act of obedience. All the commands given by God can be summarized by these two commands.

- **MOSES:** He mentioned this love many times.

His prayer for God's honor and the people's forgiveness are expressions of this love. God had offered to make him into a great nation, *in place of Israel*... and Moses refused the offer. See Exodus 32:7-14.

- **US:** This type of love remains obligatory for all people.

Jesus declared, "**Love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: '**Love your neighbor** as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:37-40 (BSB)

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❖ **(Action: Fasting?)** This involves not eating (and sometimes not drinking) for a set period of time.

❖ **Actually, fasting was NOT a goal, but the consequence of other things** that were happening.

- Fasting is the result of *other* priorities. In other words, *those other priorities may result in fasting*. (Examples: prayer or repentance.)
- In Scripture, fasting may be done:
 - ✓ By personal choice – such as in a time of sorrow, repentance, or prayer.
 - ✓ By obligation – when the leader of the people (such as the king) commands it - for national repentance, prayer, etc.
- If we *do* fast, we need to make sure that it isn't hypocritical. Fasting, in order to "earn" God's favor, *does not work*. Trying to impress people won't impress God. Also, there are more important priorities that God requires *first*. (Check out Isaiah 58.)

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❖ **Action: Praying.** This was one of the activities mentioned during Moses' second meeting with God.

- **MOSES:** Unlike much modern-day "praying," his focus *wasn't* on "me" and on matters of *temporary* value, but on "God" and "them" (other people), and on matters of *eternal* value.

Examples: ① Moses prayed that God would *not* destroy the people (even though they deserved it) – Exodus 32:7-14. He refused to accept God's offer to make him into a famous nation. ② An example of Moses praying for the people, after they had repented of sin – Numbers 21:4-9.

- **US:** Jesus gave us the example to follow – not just the example that we call "The Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6:6-13), but also:

"Father, if You are willing, take this cup [of suffering] from Me. Yet **not My will, but Yours be done.**"

Luke 22:42 (BSB)

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❖ **Action: Bowing/falling down before God.** This is just what it sounds like it is – and when Moses was in God's presence, *he did it*.

❖ **Attitude/Action: Worshiping God.** Expressing devotion, adoration, reverence to a superior (God), often accompanied by various activities – such as prayer, sacrifice (Old Testament), various rituals, etc.

- These *are* different words, but there are similarities. This is because, in *both* Old and New Testaments, the concept of "worship" has to do with bowing down in the presence of God!
- The word "bow" may have a greater emphasis on the *position* we take; the word "worship" may have a greater emphasis on the heart attitude – when we acknowledge the superiority of the one being bowed down before.
- It's significant that the concept of *humility* also signifies lowness. The *proud* tend to be unwilling to bow down before God; for it requires *humility*.

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- **MOSES:** When God revealed his glory and declared his "name" (the name representing who he is), Moses responded in worship.

Moses immediately **bowed down** to the ground and **worshiped**.

Exodus 34:8 (BSB)

- **US:** Today, many people feel a revulsion to actually bow down (or fall down before God), with other people watching. We may say that the physical act of bowing is merely a *symbolic* action... and we would rather worship "in the heart."
- This may be OK, if we *are* worshiping "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23). But just like physical bowing can become a meaningless ritual, it may be a great temptation for us to turn our "in the heart" worship into a pretension.
- God knows if our lack of physical bowing before God actually reflects a lack of worshipping in the heart. This is what matters.
- Be aware that someday we *are* going to bow or fall down before God/Jesus (Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10).

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- ❖ **Action: Patiently waiting.** This probably filled a significant part of the time Moses was in God's presence – as well as during the six days prior to that.
 - ✓ **This is actually time well spent!** Waiting is a part of following God!
 - ✓ **Waiting reveals our attitude toward God.** The Great King, does *not* need to immediately jump into action, every time we demand something!
- **MOSES:** When he waited...
 - ✓ It showed that he recognized that he *didn't deserve* to hear from God. (*None of us do.*)
 - ✓ It also showed that, based on God's promises, he **trusted/believed** that God *would* eventually speak (or respond) to him.
 - ✓ In other words, it demonstrated both *trust* and *humility*.

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Waiting means so much ...
IF we are *willing* to wait, not grudgingly or impatiently.

The value of waiting in God's presence.

- Waiting develops patience (one of the fruit of the Spirit, the opposite of impatience).
- It also shows that we are serious about God – that we have a focus on "God," rather than on "what I can get from God." It also shows that God is more important than other things we could be doing.
- It tests and purifies *our* character; while at the same time, recognizing and honoring *God's* character.
- Waiting is related to many other godly character traits and conduct, such as: hope, trust, love, a willingness to sacrifice one's own desires, a respect for who God is, an expression of honoring God, etc.

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- **US:** Waiting is a common theme in Scripture. Examples:

Be still before the Lord and **wait** patiently for him ...

Psalm 37:7a (NIV)

... while we **wait** for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ ...

Titus 2:13 (NIV)

- ❖ **Action: Fellowship with God.**
 - **MOSES:** → The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a **friend**.
 - **US:** →

Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has **nothing I desire besides you**.

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Psalm 73:25-26 (NIV)

The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a **friend**.

Exodus 33:11a (NIV)

And this **fellowship** of ours is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:3b (BSB)

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Our MISSION: Self evaluation, prayer.

⇒ **Some of the characteristics we examined were *definitely* a part of Moses' 40-day meeting with God.** Others were highly probable.

They are also characteristics that should be a part of *our* lives.

- ❖ **Do you want to follow Moses' example?**
 1. Start by learning what his example was like. Then find out how Scripture applies these same characteristics to all who want to follow God.
 2. Realize that "learning" these things is not enough! To reach the goal, it will take time, effort, God's Word, prayer, trusting God ... and even *waiting* for God. ***But with God's power (which is available to ALL who trust him), we will succeed!***

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How does all this relate to "end time" issues?

⇒ **Many Scripture passages tell us about apostasy, hypocrisy, deception, people abandoning the truth, and people who *claim* to know God, but who *deny* him by their actions.**

- ❖ **The characteristics that we have seen in Moses' life are the *same* characteristics that *we* need, if we want to survive all this "falling away."**
 - We are *not* referring to "sinless perfection," but to *growing* in godly character – similar to Peter's admonition, when he tells us we need to *grow* in various character traits (2 Peter 1:5-11).
 - We are *not* saying, "I have attained it," but "I am pursuing it, and I have it 'in increasing measure.'" (as in 2 Peter 1:8).
 - This attitude is vital during the end-times... and is *equally* vital in all ages *before* that time.

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Credits

SCRIPTURE

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